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ABSTRACT

An application of the self-authoring component of commercial software programs is described that can be used effectively in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classrooms whose students have a wide range of literacy skills. The programs described, DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB, are in the form of a puzzle that helps students to practice reconstructing sentences to see how grammar works. The feature of the software that allows the teacher to write text can be used to adapt the program to fit the needs of specific students. Uses of the software and this application in Gavilan College's (California) first and second semester ESL curricula are described. After completing lists of curriculum related paragraphs, the students are introduced to chapters of a novela that follow the course curriculum. DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB are effective teaching tools because they offer authoring programs for instructors who would like to write material directly related to class content. Student response at Gavilan has been excellent in terms of enthusiasm and computer center attendance hours. (LB)

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COMPELLING SELF-AUTHORED COMPUTER MATERIAL FOR WIDE-RANGING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) CLASSES

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As some of you have also experienced in your classes, I have a wide range of educational and English proficiency backgrounds among English as a Second Language (ESL) students in the same class. At times I have had a range from preliterate students to students with master's degrees in the same beginning ESL class. One of my many quandaries was how to best serve these students' needs in the lab time that was spent in a computer lab. Out of the uniqueness of the range of students' backgrounds came the application of commercial software programs which I am presenting today. My goal for today is that the self-authoring component of these programs will be so attractive to you that you will want to author your own material directly related to your classes and programs.

HOW DO DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB WORK

DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB are in the form of a puzzle; students see the words of a very short text arranged as an alphabetical list on the lower half of a computer screen. The students need to put the words of a sentence or sentences in the right order, one or two at a time. Students can either guess at one word (in DOUBLE UP) or guess at a pair of words (in RHUBARB) or they can read the text and then return to the screen with the list of alphabetical words. They then write the one or two words they remember. Each time a student correctly remembers one word (if s/he is using DOUBLE UP) or two words (if s/he is using RHUBARB), the words are

moved from the bottom half to the top half of the computer screen. Students continue entering one or two words, depending on which program s/he is using. If the student is using DOUBLE UP, both words can be from the lower half of the screen, or one can be from the alphabetical list on the lower half of the screen and one from the reconstructed text. As each word or pair of words is correctly typed, it is moved to the top half of the screen and placed in the correct order, so that the text builds up gradually. Students are not required to use capital letters or punctuation correctly.

In both DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB, there are two ways of getting help. The students can choose to have the computer reconstruct one or two words in the text or they can read the text in its entirety. If the students enter words that are not in the text, the computer flashes a quick message indicating that word or those words are not in the text.
The program comes with four written sets of texts:

Easy English Sentences
Quotations
French Sentences
German Sentences

There is also the option of writing your own text, which is what I chose to do when I began adapting this program to fit the needs of my students. As the students became more adapt with the program, they competed with a partner or with the

computer. However, I prefer to use it as a cooperative activity. In this mode, the students are encouraged to consult with their peers and staff members while working on the program individually. Much to my surprise however, many students like the competitive option and once they are confident with the programs, choose to compete.

HOW THE TEXTS COMPLEMENT THE CURRICULA CONTENT

At Gavilan College our first and second semester ESL curricula is organized around the following sequential themes: family, health, shopping, community services, and employment. The first computer activities for the students use RHUBARB and follow this content order. After completing many sentences which require only one word replacement at a time, students are introduced to DOUBLE UP.

Students now replace two words that are next to each other in the text. After completing two lists of curriculum related paragraphs, the students are introduced to Anna and Luisa. The chapters of Anna and Luisa follow the course curriculum. In addition, to two word replacements, students need to sequence the sections of each chapter of Anna and Luisa before beginning the following chapter.

Originally, I intended that the students would complete each chapter as that topic was studied in class; however, the students began putting in extra time in the Computer Place as

they became fascinated with the novela. Therefore, for many students, the vocabulary in the chapters of Anna and Luisa became a preview of what was to be studied in class. The chart below summarizes the extent of the extra hours logged by students.

ATTENDANCE
Fall 1991

	Content Related to Curriculum	**Content Not Related to Curriculum**	
	Computer Lab (Double Up & Rhubarb)	Reading Lab (SRA Cards)	Language Lab (Videos with closed-captioned material)
10:10 2nd Semester ESL Reading Class of 17 Students			
September	23 hours	14 hours	3 hours
October	66	11	9
November	104	28	33
December	58	32	34
TOTALS	251 +	85 +	79 = 415 hours
	17 (students) x 18 (weeks) = 306 hours required 415 hours attended		
9:10 2nd Semester ESL Reading Class of 15 Students			
September	45 hours	15 hours	8 hours
October	67	10	18
November	74	11	35
December	38	1	49
TOTALS	224 +	37 +	110 = 371 Hours
	15 (students) x 18 (weeks) = 270 hours required 371 hours attended		
GRAND TOTALS			
10:10	251	85	79
9:10	224	37	110
	475 +	122 +	189 = 786 HOURS
	32 (students) X 18 (weeks) = **576** HOURS **REQUIRED** **786** HOURS **ATTENDED**		

NISOD 1992
Austin, Texas

The other novela included in this packet, Paco, Luis, and Maria, was written by a variety of authors:

groups of students
individual students
students with classified staff
students and myself

Students need to sequence chapter sections in this novela also before beginning the following chapter.

THINKING AND CONSULTING NEEDED TO SEQUENCE EACH CHAPTER

As mentioned, once the students complete the sections of each chapter, they must read them carefully and comprehend what they have read in order to put the sections in sequence. Students are encouraged to consult with peers, tutors, classified staff and instructors to complete this task. In order to make the activity more meaningful, students are required to turn in each chapter, once it is sequenced, to the instructor. A mini-conference is held between student and instructor to see what the student thinks will happen next and/or to discuss what happened in the chapter just completed. More advanced students are encouraged to write the next chapter in the current novela.

WHERE TO OBTAIN DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB

DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB were designed by Research Design Associates, Inc. (P.O. Box 8484, Stony Brook, New York 11790) as programs to give students practice reconstructing sentences

to see how grammar works. The authoring system allows these programs to serve the needs of a variety of class levels as well as concentrate on different grammar objectives or sets of vocabulary.

In summary, DOUBLE UP and RHUBARB offer authoring programs for instructors who would like to write material directly related to class content. Student response, in terms of enthusiasm and computer center attendance hours, has been excellent to the two NOVELAS written thus far.

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